

# Middle schoolers play at

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# 'Rock of Ages'

BY SARAH DE CRESCENZO  
THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

**"It was great to see [the high school students] step up and take on the leadership role with the kids."**

**DONNIE MOORE**

Porterville Parks and Leisure Services Superintendent

More than 100 middle school students from the Porterville area joined high school students on Saturday for an afternoon of activities ranging from basketball to origami to video game competitions.

The weekend event, titled Rock of Ages and sponsored by a grant given to the Porterville Education Foundation through the Tulare County Step Up Youth Activities grant program, took place in the Heritage Center and the Santa Fe Elementary School gymnasium.

Around 40 high school students, many from Citrus High School where the grant funds are being utilized, were responsible for setting up, organizing and cleaning up after the afternoon's activities.

Kathy Pearson, Principal at Citrus High School, said for many of her students, it was the first time they were put in a such a leadership role.

"I wrote that grant so my kids could mentor, and that's exactly what they did this weekend," she said.

The grant, once fully implemented, will fund a dual-level mentorship program, in which Citrus students will work with middle school students, and in turn receive guidance from local adults.

For the middle schoolers at Rock of Ages, "we tried to have something for every one," Porterville Parks and Leisure Services Superintendent Donnie Moore said.

He, along with Pearson and Mat Keele of the Boys and Girls Club, played a key role in running the event.

Moore said both the middle school and

the high school students enjoyed competing in the activities, which concluded with a well-attended dance competition.

"There were about 40 high schoolers

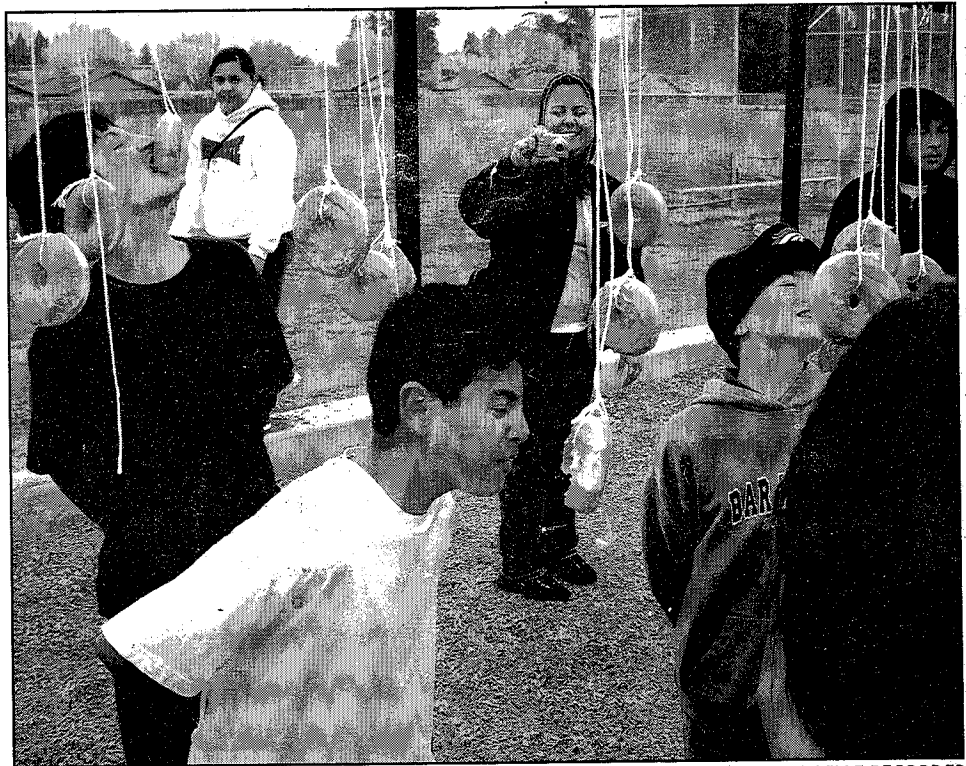


PHOTO BY TERRY BERGFALK FOR THE PORTERVILLE RECORDER

**Porterville area middle school students compete in a doughnut eating contest on Saturday as part of the Rock of Ages event at the Heritage Center.**

there, and those students were having as much as the 6th through 8th graders," Moore said.

Pearson said a beneficial side effect of the day's events was the introduction of the Heritage Center to many students who had never before visited it.

Moore called Rock of Ages a "very successful" event for a first time event.

"It was great to see [the high school students] step up and take on the leadership role with the kids — setting up before they got there, promoting the event, and they cleaned up afterward," he said.

He said some of the less traditional activities introduced some participants to new experiences, widening their horizons.

"They were exposed to things they probably hadn't done before," he said.

Some of the more unusual competitions included speed cup stacking and competitive doughnut eating.

Moore said the day's aim — offering a positive and safe environment for students to have a great time on a Saturday afternoon — was accomplished.

Money from the grant is intended to offer alternatives to gang involvement for at-risk youth.

The Board of Supervisors, through the Step Up Youth Activities grant program, distributed \$100,000 throughout the county this year toward that goal.

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